The Goldberg Variations

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The Goldberg Variations

by thisisthefamilybusiness

Summary

> “Courtesy? Courtesy? I’m pretty sure it’s not courteous to hold someone hostage and amputate their legs.” “To the contrary, Will, I do not have to keep you alive; keeping you alive is courteous. You said it yourself, I am the Chesapeake Ripper. I could kill you any time I desire, but I have not. Do not mistake my courtesy for mercy.”
>
> (Fill for the following prompt on HannibalKink: "It starts with Hannibal amputating his legs but it doesn't end there. I basically want a more gory and manipulative "Boxing Helena" version for these two.")

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

- Translation into 中文-普通话 國語 available: The Goldberg Variations 哥德堡變奏曲 by jls20011425

Bach, Tiersen, and Arabesque I

He can hear *Goldberg Variations* being played faintly in the distance. Will squeezes his eyes closed, tightens his grip in the expensive sheets colored like clotted blood, tries not to wonder what Hannibal will take from him next. Hannibal only plays Bach when he's angry, and he only plays Goldberg when he's planning something new and horrifying to do. Maybe it has nothing to do with him, Will hopes. Maybe this *Variations* was dedicated to someone else.

He doesn't have much left for Hannibal to take.

Hannibal plays Pachelbel's *Canon* for the next two days, and Will nearly cries with relief. The *Goldberg Variations* were not for him after all. Pachelbel is quiet peace, Hannibal carrying him down from his bedroom and arranging him at the dining room table and feeding him foods with names Will can't pronounce instead of the usual cold leftovers on a plastic tray, and Will ignores the voice in his head that wonders who he's eating tonight, because the last time Will spoke out of turn, Hannibal had played the *Variations* on his piano until he finally took Will's left hand in retaliation.

Will has mastered the art of ignoring those voices in his head quickly, sitting silently unless Hannibal addresses him, faking smiles on cue, learning the difference between what it meant for him when Hannibal chose to play his music or to put on a record. (It always meant good things when Hannibal sketched while listening to opera, Will learned, and bad things when he played *Goldberg Variations* on the piano.)

For a while, lying in a pain-medicated high in Hannibal's massive black four-poster bed, in a room the color of drying blood, Will had thought this might have been Hell, Hannibal's maroon-tinted eyes distorted into the glowing red stare of the Devil. He thought that he'd died, and this was his eternal punishment for crimes unknown.

But it wasn't, because once the haze of the pain medication had faded, Will realised with horror that this wasn't just a fever-dream: Hannibal Lecter was the Chesapeake Ripper, and Will was lying in his Egyptian-cotton sheets, unable to do anything.

Hannibal had taken his legs--said it was because Will had been involved in a hit-and-run when he'd tried to escape when he'd finally figured it all out. Hannibal had even been so courteous as to show him the video footage from the security camera at his front door, let Will watch himself flee into the street and get flung across the asphalt, Hannibal rushing to his prone body as the anonymous silver Honda tore away from the scene, again and again until Will had quietly begged him to stop playing it.

Will wasn't a surgeon, and he couldn't tell how injured he'd really been from the grainy footage of the accident, but he knew it hadn't been necessary for Hannibal to amputate both of his legs from the knee down.

Will didn't need to be an empath, to be able to reach into Hannibal's mind, know that it was to keep him from running.

This wasn't Hell.

This was just a life controlled by one of its monsters.

Even when Hannibal left Will alone in the house while he was at work, Will wasn't truly alone.

When Hannibal had to leave Will alone, he left Will in bed, tucked him in like a small child. If he was in a merciful mood, he might leave Will a book to read, open the blackout curtains across the dim hallway to let Will have some sunlight if the weather was nice, give Will a notebook and a pen to entertain himself with. If he was in a wicked mood, a Bach mood, he'd turn off all the houselights, leave Will in utter darkness with nothing but his mind for company.

Hannibal had an expensive, top-of-line security system that would go off if any of the doors or windows to the outside were even so much as nudged open a fraction of an inch. There weren't even any phones or computers in the house Will could use; Hannibal didn't have a house phone, and he kept his cell phone and computer locked away in the study when he wasn't using them. Even though he knew Will couldn't move from the bedroom without someone to help, Hannibal was meticulous in keeping him from escape.

The first night Hannibal had taken Will out of his room, he'd mechanically stripped Will out of the pale green hospital gown and dressed him in the same plaid button-up and oatmeal-colored sweater outfit Will been wearing when he'd tried to tell Hannibal he knew (the pants, of course, had been tailored into shorts, stopping right above the white sterile bandage around the stumps of his knees). Will had been embarrassed, at first, by the intimacy of being dressed and undressed by someone else, but Hannibal hadn't said a single word, his expression flat and unreadable, and Will found it quickly that it was easier if he let his mind wander, lying limp like a life-sized doll.

Will hadn't know yet what he now liked to think of The Rules of The Dinner Table, so he'd stabbed his fork into the plate of greyish-pink cutlets in their too-vivid red sauce with more force than necessary, ignoring the warning look Hannibal gave him from his place at the head of the table.

“Who’s on the menu tonight?” Will muttered, louder than he’d intended.

Hannibal’s knuckles turned white where they gripped his fork. “There is no need to mock my cooking, Will. I am just attempting to extend a modicum of courtesy to you.”

“Courtesy? *Courtesy*? I’m pretty sure it’s not *courteous* to hold someone *hostage* and *amputate* their legs.”

“To the contrary, Will, I do not have to keep you alive; keeping you alive is *courteous*. You said it yourself, I am the Chesapeake Ripper. I could kill you any time I desire, but I have not. Do not mistake my courtesy for mercy.”

“You’re not going to get away with this, you know. I’m sure they’re looking for me—”

“*Who* is looking for you, Will? The only witnesses to your accident were myself, you, and the driver of that car, and I imagine that driver is quite reluctant to admit to being involved in a hit-and-run.”

“Alana, and Jack—”

“How long have you been here, Will?”

“Two weeks, maybe, at most.”

“Incorrect. You have been here a month, though you were not conscious for most of it. You were very imprudent in approaching me without informing anyone of your plans, Will. Having been on the police force, I assume you know that after a person is missing for over forty-eight hours the case is considered to be cold. You are dead to the rest of the world, Will.”

A new form of terror, ice-cold and crippling, sank to the pit of Will’s stomach. He had found it all too easy to imagine Hannibal, in one of his neat black suits, faking concern to Jack, quietly reassuring Alana with comforting lies.

“You do not exist outside of this house. Is that understandable?”

Will closed his eyes for a moment and tried not to let the horror show on his face.

“You will answer when you are spoken to, Will. You will listen to me now.”

He didn’t respond.

Hannibal carried him roughly upstairs and tossed him on the bed to lie in the pitch-dark while Hannibal cleared the table of their now-spoiled dinner and played the *Variations* for two straight hours.

Will woke up the next morning with a clean white bandage where his left pinkie and index fingers should have been.

After that, Will did his best to listen to Hannibal.

Debussy’s *Arabesque I* playing on the speakers and the smell of freshly baked bread awakens Will one Sunday morning.

Relief floods his veins. *Arabesque I* is good. *Arabesque I* means that Hannibal will be gentle today, won’t threaten to take Will’s arms and keep him conscious while he does it. *Arabesque*

I means Hannibal will feed him fresh food and not leftovers, will at least put him under if he decides to take anything else from Will.

Hannibal opens the bedroom door with a smile, lets the sunlight in from the hallways, holding a tray of fresh bread and hot coffee, and for a moment, Will lets himself forget about everything he has lost and pretend that Hannibal is still his friend, still trying to protect him and help him.

It is easier than looking at the monster hiding behind his red-brown eyes.

Hannibal is listening to something new on his record player, and it sets Will on edge when he strains to hear it behind the bedroom door as he wakes from his afternoon nap. It's piano, soft, classical, bitter, different from the anger Will now hears between the notes of Bach or the happiness in Pachelbel.

"It's good to see you, Dr. Bloom," Hannibal says, opening the door to the tinkling chime of the alarm system, and Will can feel his pulse spike. Alana is here, Alana is in Hannibal's house. She could rescue him.

"Well, thank you for inviting me over, Dr. Lecter."

God, her voice sounds better than Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata* to Will.

"It is my pleasure as always..."

Will can't hear them anymore, just the clicking of Alana's heels on the floor as Hannibal leads her into the dining room, but even that is enough to send hope spiking.

He's mastered how to roll out of bed safely, and how to get down the staircase, but he can't open the door without making noise enough to alert Hannibal. And what could he say to Alana? Would she even recognise him, sallow and gaunt, missing both of his legs and his left arm up to just below the shoulder, no pinkie finger on his right hand? Hannibal at least shaved for him and cut his hair, but it had been four months since Will had last seen the outside world, and he'd grown pale and thin since.

Even if Alana did recognise him, what could she do? Hannibal would kill her, probably, maybe kill him too.

All the hope that he'd felt moments before vanishes. This was a new form of torture, then, taunting Will with his freedom and old life, making sure Will understood how thoroughly he had been imprisoned.

Will later learns the song is Tiersen's *Comptine D'Un Autre Été: L'Après-midi*, and that Hannibal only plays it when he wants to injure in all the non-physical ways.

There are small mercies, though. Hannibal sleeps alone in what used to be the guest bedroom, and he doesn't display any interest in sex at all. When Hannibal's in one of his kinder moods,

Will has learned to forget that Hannibal is a monster and to act like what Hannibal offers is genuine affection, and when Hannibal is especially dark, Will has learned to let his mind go until he's no more than an oversized doll.

It's gotten so that in those hours of Tiersen and Bach, Will just reminds himself that every part Hannibal takes from him is one less he could have taken from someone else, and then he can drift away, ignore the dread and terror Hannibal has reduced his life to.

Jack Crawford finds Will's arm and cell phone in the same observatory he found Miriam Lass's, exactly half a year after Will went missing.

The cell phone rang, but it was the same message as Miriam's, just recorded in Will's voice, pleas for help that didn't come in time.

The Ripper has taken Will.

Faust

Chapter Summary

Hannibal is growing restless.
It petrifies Will.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Hannibal is growing restless, has been alternating between Bach and Tiersen and Mozart and Dvorak without ever finishing a piece for the past two days, carrying Will down to dinner only to put him back in bed, arranging him on the settee in his study to stare in silence at each place he has cut Will down.

It petrifies Will.

Hannibal Lecter is never unstable, never unsure, never flustered, but by the fifth time Will has listened to him stop playing *Comptine D'Un Autre Été* and switch to *Lacrimosa*, Will wonders if he'd misjudged Hannibal somehow, if the doctor had reached the ends of his nerves.

Sunday is silent, with no clavier or piano or Glen Gould on the speakers to tell Will what kind of day it was going to be, and Hannibal only comes into Will's room to put him on an IV drip of unknown contents.

The brutality of Hannibal's anger was almost preferable to this sudden upset, because Will could judge that anger, could fixate his mind on guessing what Hannibal would take from him, and at least then, Will could have gauged Hannibal's mood from listening to the music that had previously filled the house.

The silence is as terrifying as Hannibal's change in temperament.

Will wakes up in total darkness, pain shooting in the phantom space his right arm used to fill. He swallows down the panic, lets his mind wander to the opening chords of *Goldberg Variations*, and tries to get his bearings.

Wherever he is, it's pitch-black, small. He's lying on his back on what feels like a rough, industrial-quality rug, so perhaps this is a closet somewhere. He can hear muffled footsteps and two voices in the distance: he's somewhere with people, then. Not buried alive or anything similar.

And Hannibal had clearly taken his arm less than a full day ago, judging from the sensations and the careful way the bandages wrapped around Will's torso under the hospital gown Hannibal dressed him in after another amputation, so wherever he is, it couldn't have been too far from Hannibal's house.

There's something around Will's jaw, covering his mouth and nose, masking the gag that Hannibal had shoved in his mouth; when he nudges his chin against his own shoulder it feels like papery fabric—a surgeon's ventilation mask, then.

"—I'm so sorry for the inconvenience, Dr. Lecter, really. Opening up old cases, though, you gotta follow the procedures to a T."

That's Jack's voice, and Will never thought he'd almost weep at the sound of Jack Crawford's voice, but there he is.

"I understand. I was one of the last people seen with Will who did not have a witness to my alibi. You know me personally, and so you know I would never have harmed Will, but in the blind eyes of the law I am a perfect suspect, and you are right to search my properties." Hannibal was with Jack, so this had to be Hannibal's office, then—and there was a *search*? They were looking for him? Is that why Hannibal had been acting so strange, because they were looking for Will again?

"Graham was a good man, you know? Deserved hell of a lot more than a fucking plaque at Quantico and an ASPCA donation fund. Couldn't even find the rest of his damned body to bury it."

"The best way we can honor Will now is by catching the Ripper. Let us not have allowed Will to give his life in vain."

They thought he was *dead*. They thought the Chesapeake Ripper had killed him. Had Hannibal left one of the limbs he'd taken in that same observatory Miriam Lass's had been in?

They didn't know—Will was right there, hidden away in some closet of Hannibal's office, *right there*, only steps away from Jack, so close that if Will could have pulled out the gag stuffed in his mouth and shouted, Jack would have heard it.

And there was nothing Will could do besides listen, once again, trapped like a moth pinned to a display board, left with nothing to struggle with, dead to everyone but Hannibal.

"Thank you for behaving," Hannibal says mildly, opening the door to the coat closet in his office and picking Will up off the floor. "I was worried you might try to cause trouble." He sets Will down in a wheelchair in the corner, covers his waist and thighs with a hospital-issue blue blanket (all part of the disguise, Will recognises). "There is no need to struggle, now. No one is going to come back."

Will closes his eyes against the stinging threat of tears as Hannibal eases a needle full of sedative into his skin.

The music returns, but Hannibal does not play it; it is only Glen Gould on vinyl or the opera on the speakers.

It does nothing to soothe the now-constant dread Will is drowning in, now unable to feed himself or sit up or even drag himself around now, dependent on Hannibal for everything. (The darker part of Will's mind, the part he struggles so hard to ignore, wonders if it's because Hannibal wants him that way, or if it's because Hannibal is planning something bigger.)

"Do you have feelings for me, Will?" Hannibal asks quietly, looking up from the sketch on his desk to where he has carefully arranged Will on the settee in the sun-filled study.

"No." There is no sense in lying. Will has begun to dream of death at night, thought of angering Hannibal to his breaking point, but he isn't sure that Hannibal would kill him.

Hannibal exhales slowly and picks up a different pencil. "Did you once?"

"No—maybe. I could have, maybe, after a while. And you, you know, didn't *kill* people."

"Do you still not find me interesting?"

"I find you sick and broken."

"I could make you love me," Hannibal says, pondering slowly. "And you would never know any different."

"But you haven't."

"Your mind is what is most precious to me, Will. I fear that if I took away that autonomy, you would lose your tenuous grip on your mind and there would be nothing left of import to me."

"There would be nothing left of import...to you," Will deadpans.

"Yes."

Will relaxes unnoticeably into the settee. This is his life, then.

Wings pinned inside a shadowbox like a dying moth, like he was only a particularly interesting specimen for Hannibal to study at his leisure.

"If I pretend to love you, would you take me outside sometimes?"

Hannibal looks back up from his drawing. "Those are not equivalent things, Will."

"You want someone to love you. You want me to find you interesting. You clearly wanted me to have feelings for you—you tried to get us both to be Abigail's adoptive fathers."

"So you would act like you cared for me if I took you outside occasionally." Hannibal doesn't sound angry, which is good. *Great*, even. No *Variations*, just *Faust* playing in the

background.

"Twice a week." Will doesn't have any other bargaining chips; Hannibal has to know it, has to, but his expression is still unreadable, still perfectly composed as he paces across the room, gently strokes his thumb along Will's jaw. Will bites the inside of his cheek hard enough to draw blood in an attempt not to flinch.

"Fine." There is something *off* in Hannibal's tone, but Will ignores it.

He can learn to ignore anything if he tries hard enough.

He can learn to fake affection for the red-eyed monster, after all.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for all your comments!

I know I said there would only be one more part, but I had to divide this into two shorter bits to make it easier to follow.

Canon in D

Chapter Summary

"Do they have any idea of when he'll wake up?"

Chapter Notes

For best effect, I recommend listening to this while you read.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Do they have any idea of when he’ll wake up?” Jack all but collapses into the sofa across from Will’s hospital bed, pinching the bridge of his nose.

Alana presses her lips into a thin line and shakes her head.

“Do they even know what’s wrong with him?”

She shakes her head again. “The right side of his brain is swollen and he’s running a high fever. That’s it.”

“Shit.”

Jack fumbles with a tab of Alka-Seltzer and a bottle of water.

Alana re-folds Will’s clammy hands in hers.

Will sleeps on.

In the distance, one floor and five hospital rooms away, in the music therapy room of the psychiatric ward, Dr. Hannibal Lecter plays Bach’s *Goldberg Variations* on the dusty old piano, thinking, debating, moving his way through the arias with an image of Will Graham framed like a dead insect specimen, limbless, helpless, dancing behind his eyelids, like a shadow suspended on dust in the sunlight.

Chapter End Notes

I know this was short, but it didn't make sense in the context of the previous chapter, so, forgive me.

End Notes

Each musical piece mentioned is real, and except 'Moonlight Sonata' and 'Comptine d'Un Autre Été', they were all featured in Hannibal or mentioned in the book series.

You can find a fanmix with most of the mentioned pieces as well as some bonuses from my personal writing playlist here on 8tracks.

Works inspired by this one

[Podfic of] The Goldberg Variations by Dr_Fumbles_McStupid

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!